Dropouts in schools in Tamil Nadu

1865. SHRI M. VINCENT : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that the number of school dropouts in urban areas of Tamil Nadu is alarmingly increasing especially in slum conglomerations ; and

(b) whether Government propose to introduce new measures to make education upto upper primary level compulsory and also provide the infrastructures in all the slum areas of major cities of Tamil Nadu in consultation with the State Government ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI L. P. SHAHI) : (a) According to available information, the dropout rates for children in classes I—V for the cohort completing class V in 1977-78 was 48.7% in Tamil Nadu. It declined to 22% in 1983-84. The All India average for the same age group of the children was 62.7% in 1977-78 and 50.3% in 1983-84. No separate information is available for urban areas or slum conglomerations.

(b) No such new proposal is under consideration.

Maintenance of National Highways

1866. SHRI M. VINCENT : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) what are the names of first three States in the country which have the record of good maintenance of National Highways;

(b) whether Government propose to increase the quantum of Central contribution to these States according to their records of good maintenance ; and

(c) what is the name of the State whose National Highways maintenance is the poorest and what are the reasons for the same ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) to (c) Development and maintenance of National Highways in the country being the responsibility of the Central Government, funds are allocated for maintenance of National Highways to all the States as per norms subject to availability of resources. States are not categorised for their track record in maintenance.

Commissioning of new International Airport at Madras

1867. SHRI M. VINCENT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) what was the outcome of the trial landing and take off recently conducted at the new International Airport at Madras ;

(b) what measures Government propose to take to expedite the functioning of the above airport commercially, indicating the likely date for its commercial commissioning ; and

(c) whether Government propose to introduce a new International flight from Madras to coincide with the commissioning of the new airport ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL) : (a) and (b) The first trial run was conducted on 14-3-1989 to test the functioning of various installations, equipment and airport facilities including users'

Preparedness to operate from the New Terminal Deficiencies identified in the first trial run were rectified. Another trial run was conducted on 28-3-1989 when two flights were handled from the Terminal satisfactorily. The New Terminal has been opened to regular operations from 26-4-1989 pending formal commissioning.

(c) No such proposal is under consideration at present.

Hardships faced by Indian/Nepalese citizens

1868. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the hardships which Indian citizens in Nepal and Nepalese citizens in India are facing due to non-renewal of Indo-Nepal treaties ; and

(b) what steps are being taken to have new treaties evolved at the earliest ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIR: (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH) : (a) After the Indo-Nepal Treaties on Trade and Transit lapsed on March 23, 1989, the old pattern of preferential trade regime with Nepal too lapsed. So as not to impede the flow of trade, the Government of India immediately permitted normal export-import flows as provided under the GATT on MFN basis, even though Nepal is not a member of the GATT. No cases of hardship to Nepalese citizens in India have come to Government's notice. However, Government have with regret learnt of instances of harassment of Indian nationals in Nepal. These are being looked into.

(b) Government have invited His Majesty's Government of Nepal to negotiate a unified treaty on trade and transit.

Causes attributed to the accident of Island Express

1869. SHRI KAMAL MORARKA:
SHRI YASHWANT SINHA:
SHRI E. BALANANDAN:
SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN:
SHRI M. A. BABY :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that public in Kerala are very much dissatisfied and agitated with the reasons attributed to the major rail accident to the Island Express which took place on July 8th, 1988 at the Perumon Bridge, Kerala ; and

(b) whether Government is seriously taking note of this discontentment and great dismay being felt by the public of Kerala and propose to take urgent steps to conduct a judicial enquiry, a comprehensive one, to go into the real cause of this tragic accident, completely ignoring the 'Tornado' theory being adopted by the Railways ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government do not propose to hold a judicial inquiry. An inquiry by the Commissioner of Railway Safety who is under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has already been conducted. The Government is examining the report. However, takinginto account the nature of the accident, a Committee of experts will also examine the report and the Government will also obtain advice of the National Transportation Safety Board before taking a final view on the report.